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ABSTRACT

This article focuses upon the use of the portfolio as a tool to assess professional performance in beginning classroom teachers and in special education applications. An Oregon pilot study, the Beginning Teacher Assessment Model (BTAM) for elementary teachers in their second or third year in the classroom, is described. The BTAM relies extensively on a portfolio to establish the knowledge and competencies of the teacher. Its purpose is to design an individualized professional development plan for each beginning teacher. Each portfolio contains required video and work sample components as well as optional components such as lessons of classroom instruction, letters from supervisors, personal statements and reflections, and accounts of professional experiences and work related to the school community. The portfolio review process is conducted by assessors who receive 2 days of training. The evaluation is an important part of the Standard Licensure process. Teachers are also encouraged to display evidence of their instructional competencies with students who have individualized education programs. Suggestions are offered for ways to show examples of professional competence in the following competency areas: (1) planning for instruction; (2) establishing a classroom climate conducive to learning; (3) implementing instruction; and (4) evaluating pupil achievement. Contains four references. (DB)

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Put the Professional Portfolio Into Focus for Individual and Special Education Applications

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"As skeptical as I have been about the portfolio, I realize it gave me a further nudge to focus on myself even more, and most important, it has convinced me of the value of reflecting and evaluating what goes on in it and why . . . I like the concept of this being a 'living' portfolio. It is not cast in stone. It breathes and changes as I do. I have been encouraged to look into myself—what makes me who I feel I am—since beginning this portfolio. I have seen a value in myself that I wasn't always sure existed. And, for today's kids, who seem to have so little sense of worth, of identity, or of hope of ever discovering any, I feel the portfolio could serve to open up a whole new understanding and appreciation of themselves and those around them." (Donna Galella, eighth grade teacher, New York, NY)

Introduction

Most of the current portfolio usage in education is designed for authentic assessment of pupils' work in K-12 settings. This article focuses upon the use of the portfolio as a tool to assess professional performance as a beginning classroom teacher and in special education applications. Recent studies have confirmed that the portfolio system is reliable for assessing beginning teachers (Smoken & Newman, 1992).

Assessing Professional Growth

In 1993, Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) developed a Beginning Teacher Assessment Model (BTAM) pilot study for elementary education teachers in their second or third year in the classroom (Osterman, Myton, and Krug, 1994). The BTAM relies extensively on a portfolio to establish the knowledge and competencies required for the second-stage (Standard) teaching license. The portfolio will include, but not be limited to, evidence of effectiveness drawn from their performance as classroom teachers at the Mastery level. Teachers can use the portfolio to authentically display their professional performance in teaching mainstream and Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) in the classroom setting.

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The purpose of the BTAM assessment is to design an individualized professional development plan for each beginning teacher. That plan may include additional graduate preparation in the subject area, planned work experiences in business and industry related to the teacher's subject matter specialty, and/or further preparation related to teaching methods in the subject. The additional experiences or preparation would be completed during the three-year period to issuance of the second-stage (Standard) license. TSPC believes that teachers who participate in the Beginning Teacher Assessment Model and satisfactorily complete the individualized professional growth plan will be well along the way in preparing for the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards evaluations and certification later in their careers.

Portfolio Contents

Criteria which may be considered in detecting the preparedness of the beginning teacher for standard licensure include competence in written and oral communication, presentation/peer teaching, professional performance in displaying TSPC's 27 competencies (Oregon Administrative Rules 584-15-055 and 584-16-070) for teaching and learning, and community work. The portfolio will be assessed by a team of assessors (elementary teacher, elementary principal, teacher educator, TSPC Commissioner). After the team completes its review of the portfolio, they will make a recommendation for licensure and provide a professional growth plan for the BTAM candidate. The portfolio will then be passed to another team of assessors which will also review the portfolio. If the teams disagree, a committee of TSPC Commissioners will make a final judgment regarding licensure.

Each portfolio will contain two required pieces and optional components as described below:

1. *30-minute video (required).* The videotape will show the teacher's work in an instructional setting. The teacher is required to display how he or she plans for instruction, establishes a classroom conducive to learning, implements instruction, and finally evaluates student achievement. The teacher may display classroom rules, behavior, or learning opportunities; work with students with disabilities; and work on specifics about the classroom, use of IEPs, and other displays of the 27 TSPC competencies.

2. *Work Sample (comprehensive and designed for assessing the candidate's classroom environment).* A work sample consists of a series of related lessons of two- to five-week durations, which is part of the school curriculum and contains the following elements: (1) goals for a unit of study; (2) instructional plans for each lesson; (3) information on pupils' knowledge and skills prior to instruction; (4) data on learning gains resulting from instruction; (5) interpretation and explanation of learning gains or lack thereof; and (6) a description of uses to be made of the findings on learning gains in planning further instruction and in reporting pupil progress. TSPC believes that the work sample will make a difference in the effectiveness of beginning teachers in several important respects. First, work samples focus unit planning on the curriculum objectives of the school and district, by providing direction and a sense of security for teachers who might otherwise be preoccupied with maintaining classroom order or unable to assure adequate coverage of the curricular program. Second, the preparation of the work sample insures that instruction is carefully designed and reviewed before teaching, to assure that content is clearly and carefully developed and instruction is properly sequenced. Third, the work sample provides for accurate assessment of pupil achievement before instruction so that the difficulty of subject matter content matches students' current achievement levels and needs. Fourth, the work sample helps the beginning teacher to estimate the time needed

for instruction and seat work assignments to insure adequate time on academic tasks, sufficient learning activities, and completion of lessons, all of which directly influence pupil achievement. Fifth, the work sample requires analysis of learning gains in relation to district goals, by focusing attention on the use of student performance data in planning subsequent instruction. Finally, the work sample provides a reflection upon how the teacher works individually with special education students and explains their growth.

3. *Six of the Following 10 Items:*

a. *Lessons of Classroom Instruction.* The lesson can include interdisciplinary work or Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) requirements to meet the 21st Century reform. Lesson plans can display work with children with disabilities, exceptionalities, IEPs, and other conditions using community and professional resources. Presenting lesson plans from different instructional areas reflect the teacher's ability to plan and carry out instruction over diverse areas. Lesson plans also can illustrate how the instruction uses a variety of instructional techniques to achieve planned objectives.

b. *Student Records of Achievement in the Subject Area.* Examples of what awards and honors are received by students for academic performances. Samples of students' journals, writing projects, science, and math exhibits can be included in the portfolio. Examples of students' work from different lessons can be provided for displaying diversity in learning. The students' work is a direct measure of teacher instruction.

c. *Letters from Teachers or Supervisors.* These letters can document the teacher's work in school and community activities for advancing children in academic fields. Peer review allows for constructive response from others who may be teaching in a related area or competent in giving constructive reactions. Responses from administrators and teachers allow an outside source that is helpful in gaining perspective concerning the relevance of the instruction for what is important for the students.

d. *Small Group Instruction Diagnosis (SGID) Report from Pupils.* This evaluative activity can be included to display likes and areas of improvements suggested by students. The teacher can describe what he or she has done to meet the areas of improvements and illustrate the teaching and learning conditions preferred by the pupils. Students can offer evaluations of teaching content. Further, they can offer opinions about the capability of the teacher to receive valuable information regarding teacher strengths and changes necessary for making improvements.

e. *Personal Statements and Reflections of Work.* Teacher portfolios should reflect the specific strengths and accomplishments of the teacher. Teacher portfolios can facilitate the teacher's own reflection of what he or she has attempted and set as personal goals. These statements allow for the teacher's philosophy of education to be presented. This philosophy helps the teacher in articulating the educational program established and reflects ones belief involving instruction and assessment.

f. *Observation Reports.* Frequently, the teacher is visited by student teachers or visitors from other schools or even other nations. These visitors may write up a report on what they viewed happening in the classroom for demonstrating competencies related to TSPC's 27 competencies.

g. *Classroom Management Procedures and Policies.* The teacher's contingency plans for in-class emergencies, classroom rules and understanding, district procedures, and other policies that express classroom rules and behavioral expectations appropriate to the level of development of the pupils and consistent with laws governing the student rights and responsibilities can be included in the portfolio to prove classroom management.

h. *Examples of Meeting the Needs of Multicultural Diversity.* The teacher can provide samples of principles of sex equity and racial justice. This can be done to show a least restrictive environment for students with disabilities when establishing classroom rules and procedures. The teacher can include lessons of learning the culture and uniqueness of diverse populations, and how he or she adapts unit and lesson plans for exceptional learners from varying cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds.

i. *Professional Experiences and Work Related in the School Community.* As the teacher works with instructional assistants, parent volunteers, community resources, and business partnerships to achieve instructional objectives, this coordination can show the professional networking activities of the teacher. Also the teacher can list current workshops, inservice, and class activities he/she has attended for continuing to improve one's effective teaching.

j. *Other Pertinent Activities to Demonstrate the Candidate's Competencies in Subject Matter and Professional Knowledge in the Classroom.* Optional in nature, this area can be left to the teacher to explain future goals that include specific objectives that will facilitate the attainment of these goals.

4. *(Optional) Resume, especially highlighting experience or job related to work with children or adolescents.*

5. *(Optional) Letters of support from mentor teacher.*

6. *(Optional) Letters of support from agencies, colleges, and recognized professionals.*

Portfolio Review Process

The process for assessing the first set of portfolios is as follows:

1. The teacher's professional portfolios will be delivered to TSPC on or before December 30, 1994. Portfolios delivered after that time will not be accepted.

2. TSPC staff will go through the portfolio contents and assign the portfolio to teams that will not bias the results. A group of five Portland State University graduate students will be assigned to monitor the assessment panels and their work. Western Oregon State College's Teacher Research Division will conduct an inter-rater reliability study of the panels.

3. The assessors will examine each portfolio first in groups of four, render a judgment, write a professional growth plan, and sign off as a team for the decision they have made. The portfolio will receive the same treatment with another assessment panel. If there are any major disagreements with the two panel review processes of the portfolio, then a panel of TSPC Commissioners will render a final judgment.

4. Portfolios will then be sent to TSPC's Licensure Committee on March 30, 1995 with a recommendation regarding Standard Licensure. The Licensure Committee will conduct a final quality control check before it makes a recommendation to the full Commission regarding licensure.

5. Shortly after the TSPC March 30-31, 1995 meeting, TSPC will inform all candidates about the results of the Standard Licensure recommendation and provide each candidate with a professional growth plan.

Assessor Training

The panels of assessors receive two days of training and spend two days assessing the portfolios. The manual for the assessors provides the rubric for scoring the portfolios and all of the forms and strategic information necessary for assessing the portfolios.

Professional Display Of Instructional Competencies With IEP Students

Oregon's schools have always ranked among the top five states in the nation in the area of mainstreaming students with IEP's into the regular classroom. Recent inclusion efforts by Oregon schools have resulted in an even higher percentage of students with IEP's spending all or most of their school day in the regular classroom. The typical Oregon elementary classroom teacher now has from three to five students with IEP's in her/his class.

As Oregon investigates the viability of using Professional Portfolios to encourage professional growth of its teachers, a key question arising is how will the regular classroom teacher use the Professional Portfolio to reflect teaching competency with students who are on IEP's?

The areas in which teaching competencies are assessed for licensure are stipulated in the Oregon Administrative Rules, Chapter 584 Regulations and are: planning for instruction; establishing a classroom climate conducive to learning; implementing instruction; and evaluating pupil achievement. These competency areas will be the focus areas when the BTAM Portfolio Assessors evaluate the BTAM Professional Portfolios. By addressing these four areas, the regular classroom teacher will be able to reflect his or her teaching competency with the IEP students in the classroom. The type of adaptations that the classroom teacher can make to meet the learning needs of students with IEP's, according to Jackson, et al. (1993), can be grouped into four areas: environmental, material, presentation, and assistance by others.

A listing of adaptations made by classroom teachers to fit and meet the needs of their students with IEP's was gathered from the Oregon Supported Education Study conducted by the Oregon Department of Education and Portland State University during 1991-1993 (Arick, et al., 1993). These teachers suggested adaptations and suggestions about how they can be shown on the Professional Portfolio.

Competency Area: Planning for Instruction

Environmental Adaptations

Teachers in the Oregon Supported Education Study reported spending more time in planning and setting up learning stations and activity-based experiences in which students used more hands-on materials. Professional Portfolios could reflect this planning by showing the lesson plans and daily schedules which have been developed.

Material Adaptations

Examples provided by the classroom teachers included using graph paper to line up a math problem, enlarging pages for easier reading, highlighting materials, and adapting materials to reflect the IEP student's reading level. A teacher's Professional Portfolio should include samples of these adapted materials.

Presentations Adaptations

Adaptations in presentation included increasing the use of visuals, moving about the room more, and decreasing lecture time with increased time spent in student-centered activities. Teachers developing Professional Portfolios find that video taping is an excellent vehicle for showcasing their individual presentation style.

Assistance by Others

Using an instructional assistant, peer buddies and volunteers effectively in the classroom requires considerable planning. Teachers preparing a Professional Portfolio can reflect that planning by including training manuals and work schedules, and showing their assistants at work with students on video tape.

Competency Areas: Establishing A Classroom Climate Conducive to Learning and Implementing Instruction

The BTAM assessors will be looking for examples from the Professional Portfolio which reflect full acceptance and participation of students with IEP's who are in the regular classroom.

Environmental Adaptations

Examples of teacher adaptations to the environment in order to meet needs of students with IEP's include clear articulation of classroom rules and behaviors expected of everyone, and repeating and reviewing rules frequently. Management systems for the whole class with careful sequencing of activities and with silent work periods intermittently throughout the day keeps students calm. Examples of management systems and rules can readily be included in the Professional Portfolio.

Material Adaptations

Ideas for material adaptation include having greater participation and feedback from students on what they want to learn, and using self-monitoring when possible. Self reflection from students regarding how they perceive themselves in this learning environment can be included in the Professional Portfolio.

Presentation Adaptations

The most common adaptation reported by teachers in their presentations was an increase in the use of small cooperative learning groups. This format increases the likelihood that the non-IEP student will serve as a model and assistant. Annotation to lesson plans and video tape is an ideal vehicle for explaining presentationadaptations made by the teacher.

Assistance by Others

Involving volunteer students and adults in effective teaching in tutorial or small group settings reflects a classroom that is meeting

the individual needs of the IEP learner. Schedules and detailed instructional lesson plans used by the assistants should be shown also in short segments on video tape.

Competency Area: Evaluating Pupil Achievement

Environmental Adaptations

Many teachers in the Oregon Supported Education Study reported arranging seating patterns to accommodate students with IEP's, using more learning stations in which projects are cooperatively evaluated; using more student self-evaluation, and carrying out the philosophy of not measuring students against other students. Narrative description of these efforts, along with video tape is an effective way of showing these adaptations in the Professional Portfolio.

Material Adaptations

Teachers also reported using record/tape books, less writing and more verbal responses for their students with IEP's; and used shortened tests by selecting key questions. Use of student portfolios also was reported as an effective means for evaluating the work of all students, and also those with IEP's. Samples of student effort, along with the formal Work Sample could be included in the Professional Portfolio.

Presentation Adaptations

The use of worksheets which require a minimum of writing; using study guides; accepting alternate forms of information sharing such as art; and setting up tests so that they can be retaken until passed were suggested. Also, grading on individual progress and effort, and having a closely monitored tracking system for assignments and due dates were reported by these teachers. All of these types of adjustments could be described in the Professional Portfolio.

Assistance by Others

Individual evaluations can be set up for the student with IEP by using teaching assistants, volunteers, etc. to administer and/or read quizzes and tests to students who can dictate responses. Showing a sample of these on video tape is an excellent way for the teachers to show adaptations they are making in the area of student assessment.

Reflection

The many suggested instructional adaptations provided by the classroom teachers participating in the Supported Education Study show that experienced regular education teachers with the support of special education teachers are making many easy to implement, but effective adaptations to their instruction in order to accommodate students with IEP's. Teachers preparing Professional Portfolios will find that planning and instructional adaptations they make can, with some forethought, be readily reflected in their Professional Portfolio. The efforts made by teachers to meet the needs of their IEP students do lend themselves to the Professional Portfolio and quite adequately reflect the teachers' instructional competency in the four areas in which teachers are assessed.

Conclusion

The State of Oregon has launched the use of the portfolio to assess the professional performance of teachers in the classroom setting. Through the Beginning Teacher Assessment Model (BTAM) Pilot Study, Teacher Standards and Practices Commission is researching the portfolio for better evaluating teachers and providing professional growth plans before final licensure. As part of the study, researchers will examine how new teachers address students with disabilities in planning and implementing instruction, establishing a classroom conducive to learning, and assessing pupil achievement. A prominent concern in the study will be the regular classroom teacher's demonstration in the Professional Portfolio on how he or she reflects upon teaching students who are on IEP's.

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